

Message Text

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ACTION NASA-02

INFO OCT-01 AF-06 ISO-00 OES-05 FSE-00 PA-02 PRS-01 /017 W

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R 060544Z MAR 76

FM AMEMBASSY TANANARIVE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8013

UNCLAS TANANARIVE 362

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: TSPA

SUBJ: TERMINAL PAYMENTS FOR EX-NASA EMPLOYEES

REF: (A) STATE 047213 (B) TANA 0324

1. CHECKS WERE DISTRIBUTED MARCH 1 TO EX-NASA EMPLOYEES. DELEGATION OF SEVEN EMPLOYEES CALLED ON CHARGE SAME DAY WITH LETTER WARMLY EXPRESSING APPRECIATION FOR PAYMENTS. (COPY POUCHED AF/). IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT ONLY ABOUT 80 OF THE 214 EX-EMPLOYEES ARE PRESENTLY EMPLOYED.

2. AS RESULT OF CHARGE'S STATEMENTS TO PRESS FOLLOWING HIS FEB. 28 CALL ON PRIMIN (REF B), THREE NEWSPAPERS AND MADAGASCAR RADIO AND TV THUS FAR HAVE REPORTED THE PAYMENTS. TWO PAPERS (MADAGASCAR MATIN AND MARESAKA) HIGHLIGHTED FMG 35 MILLION (APPROXIMATELY \$160,000) US PUT INTO MALAGASY ECONOMY, IN ADDITION TO FMG 16 MILLION USG PAID IN SEPTEMBER 1975 FOR UN-COMPENSATED OVERTIME AND UNUSED LEAVE.

3. MARESAKA DESCRIBED PAYMENT AS "A GIFT... EVEN IF THE DECISION TO CLOSE THE STATION WAS NOT MADE BY NASA BUT BY THE MALAGASY GOVERNMENT." MARESAKA ALSO NOTED THAT SPECULATION ABOUT REOPENING OF NASA BASE WAS ONLY MERE RUMOR. ANOTHER PAPER, SMALL-CIRCULATION SAHY (INDEPENDENT), WHICH DID NOT BOTHER TO CHECK WITH US, WAS LESS GENEROUS: "WHAT MADE AMERICANS HERE CHANGE THEIR MIND? ... OUR RELATIONS WITH THE US ARE NOT VERY WARM ... THERE IS NO RESIDENT AMBASSADOR BUT ONLY CHARGE D'AFFAIRES WHO PERFORMS MEANINGLESS CURRENT BUSINESS. HOWEVER, THE AMERICANS CHANGED THEIR MIND SUDDENTLY..."

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4. COMMENT: NOTWITHSTANDING OUR URGENT PLEASE FOR EARLY PAYMENT TO EX-NASA EMPLOYEES, THE DELAY MIGHT VERY WELL HAVE BEEN IN OUR FAVOR. IF PAYMENT HAD BEEN MADE DURING PERIOD NOVEMBER-JANUARY, ITS IMPACT WOULD HAVE BEEN LOST BECAUSE OF INTENSE INTEREST IN DECEMBER 21 REFERENDUM AND FORMATION OF "NEW" GOVT. JANUARY 12-13.

5. ON BALANCE, MEDIA PUBLICITY WAS CLEARLY IN OUR FAVOR, AS WERE COMMENTS HEARD AROUND TOWN INCLUDING THOSE FROM PRIMIN, MFA AND EX-EMPLOYEES.SHEINBAUM

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